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After yielding for two centuries and a half to the clamours of the Jesuits and of the partizans of the Medicis, his countrymen became at last sensible of his merit, and blushed for their long neglect of this illustrious man. The Chevalier Baldelli was appointed by the Florentine academy, to pronounce an eulogy on his character ; and in 1787 a splendid monument was erected to his memory, in the church of the Holy Cross, with the following inscription.

Tanto nomini nullum par elogium.

Nicholaus Machiavelli.

Obiit anno A. P. V. MDXXVII.



ART. XVI. *The Sylphs of the Seasons, with other poems.* By W. Allston. First American from the London Edition. Boston, Cummings & Hilliard.

It will, perhaps, appear to our readers a late hour in the day for us to take up this volume. But we should be sorry to have it said of us, a few years hence, when these poems shall be more generally read and understood, that we were so wanting in good taste as to pass them by without notice ; and that while we were joining in the common lamentation over the lack of American poetick genius, we were too dull to discern the almost single exception from the cause of our mortification and grief. Though we are not of those, who wear home-spun, however coarse, because it is patriotick so to do, yet we trust that we have the common sense to look at the quality of our garb without caring much whence it came. We think that some good thing may come out from us ; and with that confidence, with which all reviewers are, or should be blessed, we are content to venture an opinion upon the works of our own country, without waiting till they have forced their way into notice through the cold indifference of a foreign land.

English in our origin, and owing to the character of our birth-place, almost all that we have cause to be proud of in our natures ; speaking her language, and reading her literature with the same commonness as if it were our own ; boasting of her works of genius in the entire forgetfulness

that they are not ours ; and defending them with the same earnestness of partiality as if our own reputation were at stake ; we seem to have been unmindful that it was possible for us to have a literary character at home, and writers of our own to read and admire. We look to England for almost all our learning and entertainment ; our metaphysicks and morals are drawn from her ; and for poetry, the common reading of all countries, we enter into the assembly of her bards alone. This continued dependence upon England has not only turned us away from the observation of what is well done here, but has begotten a distrust of our own judgment and taste. We hesitate at pronouncing an opinion on what has not received judgment there ; and dare not confess where we have been offended or pleased, lest her tribunals of criticism should, by and by, come down upon us and tell us we were wrong.

Further than this neglect of our own productions, and timidity of opinion upon their merits, the rank of our authors in society is humbling to minds rightly proud of their powers, and quick and sensitive from culture and native feeling. One generation goes on after another, as if we were here for no other purpose than to do business, as the phrase is. The spirit of gain has taught us to hold all other pursuits as amusements, and to associate something unmanly and trivial with the character of their followers. If a work of taste comes out, it is made a cause of lament that so much talent should be thus thrown away ; and the bright and ever-during glory in which it is, in mercy, hiding our dull commonness, is neither seen nor felt. We hold every thing lightly, which is not instantly perceived to go immediately to some practical good ; to lessen labour, increase wealth, or add to some homely comfort. It must have an active, business-like air, or it is dreaded as a dangerous symptom of the decay of industry amongst us. To be sure, we read English poetry ; but for the same reason that we take a drive out of town, because we are tired down by business, and must amuse ourselves a little, to be refreshed and strengthened for work to-morrow. And, besides, the English, we say, can afford to furnish us with poetry. They are an old, wealthy people, and have a good deal of waste material on hand. And so it comes about, naturally enough, that poets are set down as a sort of intellectual idlers, and sober citizens speak of them

with a desponding shake of the head, as they talk of some smart rake of the town, who might be a useful member of society, did he not, unhappily, waste his mind in dissipation. Little do such men see, that out-o'-door industry, which leads to wealth and importance, owes much to the poet for its thriving existence ; that the poetry of a people elevates their character by making them proud of themselves ; quickens the growth of the nicer feelings and tones the higher virtues ; that it causes blessings to shoot up round our homes ; smooths down the petty roughnesses of domestick life, and softens and lays open the heart to all the better affections ; that it calls the mind off from the pursuits of the tainted and wearing pleasures of the world, and teaches it to find its amusements in the exercise of its highest and purest powers ; that it makes the intellect vivacious, and gives an interest and stir to the society of the wise ; shames us from our follies and crimes, turns us to the love and study of what is good, gives health to the moral system, and brings about, what must always go along with virtue, the beauty of order and security in society. Little, too, do they know of the poet's incessant toil. His eyes and thoughts are ever busy amidst all the forms of things. He looks into the intricate machinery of the heart and mind of man, and sees all its workings, and tells us to what end it moves. He goes forth with the sun over the whole earth, and looks upon its vastness and sublimity with him, and searches out with him every lesser thing. His studies end not with the day ; but when the splendour of the west has died away, and a sleepy and dusky twilight throws a thin and shadowy veil over all things, and he feels that the spirit which lifted him up and expanded his whole frame, as he looked forward on the bright glories of the setting sun, has sunk slowly and silently down with them, and that the contemplative light about him has entered into his heart and the gladness of the day left him, he turns and watches the lighting up of the religious stars, by which he studies in soberer and more intent thought the things that God has made.

The present age has been abundant in poets, and those of a kind that show that true taste is reviving, and the natural feelings coming fast into full and free play again ; and it is grateful to consider, that close descriptions of mind and heart, which grow up and intertangle with them, are relished and understood. For to love nature, and to have an eye

that sees her truly, shows that there is a moral tone in chord with her sounding at the heart, and some pure spots in the mind, on which her images play, like young leaves, on calm and clear waters. It is well for the mind, that the gates are burst open, and the walls levelled with the ground, and that we are let out from exactly cut hedges, artificial mounds, and straight canals, nicely sloped and sodded to the very brink, to the free and careless sweep of hills, and winding run of the stream, to which God seems to have given instinct enough to work its way, through a strange country, to its home in the ocean. It is pleasant to be set at large once more among varied and irregular creations, and the abundant and wide wealth of the earth; for there we find enough, and even more than the mind can fold in; so that we are ever eager to learn, and associations are continually crowding upon us and shifting, to give growth to our sentiment, and breadth and thought to our minds. Nature is suggestive, and makes him that studies her, work with her. She is always active, and out of the very decay of things comes life. When the mind is in this way left to its own pursuits, it gains vigour and quickness, and truth of observation from its independence, and the factitious and false, which had crusted it over in the confused and hot stir of pent society, loosens, and breaks up, and falls off, and it becomes sensible to fair impressions, and has a clear and calm expanse, like the heavens over our heads.

But poetry has not only been set free from its narrow views of material nature, and given us a feeling of kindred with the very pebbles on the shore; but has thrown aside the distinctions of society, and treats of us all in common, as creatures of like passions, sensible to like impressions, and capable of like thoughts—has made us heart-sick with grief at the low-breathed sorrows of Wordsworth's weaver's wife, or the humble Ellen Orford of Crabbe, and shudder at the intensity of the evil passions in Peter Grimes. With an enlarged philosophy, it teaches us that there is nothing vulgar but vice, and that there is scarce an object through the whole of existence, that is not in some way poetical to a truly poetical mind. We have thrown out these few thoughts, because we think them essential to a right understanding of what poetry is; and feel anxious for the knowledge of the truth on all subjects, as it not only leads us to a right under-

standing of the particular object of our contemplations, but makes us better acquainted with something else ; for there is nothing lonely in nature, but each thing is connected with many others, by more ties than those which hold a tree in the ground. We hope soon to have an opportunity of entering more fully into this subject.

But enough of this ; and now to our author. He must excuse us, for even reviewers, like the ladies, must follow the fashion ; and a review, now a days, without a dissertation at its head, would look about as singular, as a slender maid of sixteen, in close wrapt muslin and simple smoothly-parted hair, amidst expanded hoops and storied head dresses, on a St. James' Court-day.

As every body knows every body, in this country, and what every body has done, is doing, and, we might almost say, intends to do, it is hardly necessary to state that most of the volume before us was written during Mr. Allston's short residence in Boston, a few years since, and was read in manuscript by a goodly number, and talked about and admired. But, unfortunately, the book was put out in a country in which our author was a stranger, and which has never been in haste to search out our merits, or give them deserved praise, and, so the work passed unnoticed. And we, here, seemed to have come to the resolution to forget our former praises, and not risk our reputation by the declaration of an opinion upon the merits of a production, which came upon us in all the formality of print.\*

This volume is made up of several poems, the longest of which contains between six and seven hundred lines. It was written, we believe, in what were Mr. Allston's moments of rest from his professional pursuits, at odd times, and with great rapidity. We would not set up for the author the old and impudent apology of 'leisure hours ;' nor urge the quickness, with which it was written, as an excuse for negligence in the finish. Indeed, we do not think that it discovers such negligence ; but hold it as one among many instances of powerful and tasteful minds, working surest and to most effect the more rapidly they move. The imagination and feelings are then excited, and there is at the same

\* We should except a well written notice of these poems in the *Analectic Magazine*.

time a truth of touch about them, which makes them turn off from every thing vulgar and out of form or place.

If we rightly remember, Warton, in his criticism upon Pope, has expressed a doubt of his right to the rank of a poet, because he never produced a work of somewhat the respectable size or form of an epick. Had Pope so done, the world could not long have remained in doubt, as to the justice of his claim. He would have been set down by every body, as he is now by a sacred few, as a man full of strong sense, of infinite wit and smartness, and of a fancy, sprightly, indeed, but more conceited, curious, and ingenious, than poetical. As we think there are better reasons, which we should be happy to state, were there time, than that of Warton, for denying to Pope the character of what is peculiarly and essentially poetry, and should not have had a moment's doubt as to Campbell's poetick genius, had he never written more than his 'Battle of the Baltic,' we may be allowed to treat upon what is before us as poetry, notwithstanding the shortness of its several parts.

The first poem, and that on 'Eccentricity,' are sketchy, and would have been improved by filling up. The others are, perhaps, as complete as the nature of their several subjects, and the sprightly narrative manner in which they are treated, would admit of. Without intending to take from their merit, we should rank them with the lighter kind of poetry. They have not the continually shifting and bustling scenes and breathless speed of Scott; nor does Mr. Allston, like Byron, stir the fiery passions within you, or carry you down into the dark and mysterious depths of the soul, moving you to and fro in their wild and fearful workings. He is not majestick and epic; nor does he make you serious and sad, like Wordsworth, showing you a stained world, and dejected virtue, throwing a hue of thoughtful melancholy over our brightest joys. His mind seems to have in it the glad, but gentle brightness of a star, as you look up to it, sending pure influences into your heart, making it kind and cheerful. He paints with a particularity and truth, which show that he has looked upon nature with his own eyes, and not through those of other men. He has not only an eye for nature, but a heart too, and his imagination gives them a common language, and they talk together. As we said of the poetry of the present day, so with him, every thing has

soul and sense. If he turns towards a morning or evening sky, 'the clouds are touched, and in their silent faces, he reads unutterable love.' His scenes, for the most part, are of the beautiful, and lie quietly in gentle sun-light; though the clouds are sometimes seen mustering up, and passing with their giant shadows, like dark spirits, over them. His imagination is cheery and youthful, and each thing with him has a thousand fanciful qualities and uses, and an imaginative as well as a true birth. His mind is creative, and without being fantastical or extravagant, gives as many characters to objects about him, as a child to his playthings. He views all his scenes with a curious and exquisite eye, instilling some delicate beauty into the most common thing that springs up in them, imparting to it a gay and fairy spirit, and throwing over the whole a pure, floating, glow. He is always searching into what is excellent and fair in creation, and even in his satires, plays with the follies of mankind, with an undisturbed gentleness of heart, and turns away from their vices, and shuts out their loathsomeness from his mind. He seems to look upon the world in the spirit in which it was made—the spirit of love; and, though marred, to see the beauty in which it was ordained, and feel its purity through all its defilements. We cannot read any part of this book, without feeling ashamed of the angry and bitter passions, which are so often rising up within us, nor without wishing that our own minds were as void of pride, suspicion, and hate, as is all we there find, and that as clear and happy an innocence were shed over our own hearts as shines out there.

Though we have not allowed to Mr. Allston a mastery over the more intense passions, yet he seems filled with the milder feelings, and to have nothing pass through the imagination untouched by them. All that the world contains is, with him, a sentiment, and quickens the feelings and thoughts. Indeed, it seems to be peculiarly the character of his, and almost all good modern poetry, to make all that surrounds us within doors, and in our daily affairs abroad, administer good to our hearts and minds, so that, if it does not make poets of us all, it will cause us to be wider and more accurate thinkers, as well as better men.

Besides this character, the poems before us, in many parts, run up into the wild, and visionary, and magnificent, and the eye brightens and enlarges. and the spirits are lifted, as



as we enter into them. All, however, is of the same joyous temperament ; for if the scene, viewed alone, would be dark and awing, you find it in the midst of satire and humour, and their lights are observed, playing and sparkling over it, as in ‘The Paint King,’ and ‘The Two Painters.’ And this brings us on our way to other qualities in these poems—the character of their satire and wit. It is usual to rank every production in verse under the head of poetry ; so that poetry has come to be a matter of measure, as much as broadcloth ; and, provided it be strong and smooth, the question is never asked, whether it is indeed what it passes for. As we have but one name for all works in verse, and, perhaps, were another found, the world would be forever disputing by which each particular production should be called, it must be left to the thorough taste of readers, and the deep discussions of criticks, to give every man his rank. Through this indistinctness of what constitutes poetry, you will hear many who have said good things and touched off a character smartly in metre, counted over in the same list with Shakspeare and Milton ; and the satires of Swift and Pope, placed before those of Butler and Churchill on the score of poetry. Now we hold the latter to be as undoubtedly poets, as if they had written ‘The Seasons’ of Thompson ; and cannot recal a passage in the satires of the two former, which has what, to our minds, is in a strict sense poetry ; or should we mistrust our memories, and grant the character to either, it would be rather to Swift than to Pope. We profess to relish them both, and think we read them with as much true delight, as those, who have attributed to them powers they never possessed, and, perhaps, never distinctly understood those which were peculiarly theirs. But the satirical part of the book before us, is crowded with natural scenery, both beautiful and grand, and the strange regions of the imagination are traversed to find objects for it ; or, perhaps, we should rather say, the spirit of satire is travelling over these, which, taken away, would leave behind, a wide and varied prospect, lovely, and wild, and mysterious, such as the eyes of few satirists ever before looked upon. Yet with all this, the satire is not made subordinate to the scenery through which it passes. There is nothing bitter or hard in it. But it appears so bright and playful, that the fairest prospects look gladder in it, and we see it flickering along the more gloomy, like a stream of moon-

light, stretching a glittering and silvery line over the steely blackness of the waters, as they lie sleeping under the sullen and brown hills. It sports with the ridiculous in the good natured manner of Gray, and avoiding with, perhaps, something of a weak amiableness, the vices of the world, would correct our affectation and foibles, without wounding our spirit. There is a sensitiveness about the goodness of some men, that makes them sicken and recoil from the touch of crime, and unfits them for wrestling with the violence of the bad. But though strong men are wanted for the contest; yet the former have their uses; for they prevent our sternness turning to inhumanity, and thus making our very excellencies pander to our faults; and tell us with a timely caution to our pride, that indignation against vice is not alone virtue.

It is time for us to leave our remarks upon the general character of our author's work, and proceed to give some account of the several poems, together with extracts. The first, '*The Sylphs of the Seasons*,' describes the scenery peculiar to each season of the year, and more particularly the different influences of each upon the mind. The poet represents himself as tired by mental travel, betaking himself to rest, when the following vision arose.

'Methought within a desert cave,  
Cold, dark, and solemn as the grave,  
I suddenly awoke.  
It seem'd of sable Night the cell,  
Where, save when from the ceiling fell  
An oozing drop, her silent spell  
No sound had ever broke.

There motionless I stood alone,  
Like some strange monument of stone  
Upon a barren wild;  
Or like, (so solid and profound  
The darkness seem'd that wall'd me round)  
A man that's buried under ground,  
Where pyramids are pil'd.'

He is soon carried by the magick of his dream, which often outdoes the magick of all waking wonder-workers, from this cave, into a castle upon a mountain plain, below which a region is spread over with scenery of every season.

‘ And now I pac’d a bright saloon,  
That seem’d illumin’d by the moon,  
    So mellow was the light.  
The walls with jetty darkness teem’d,  
While down them crystal columns stream’d,  
And each a mountain torrent seem’d,  
    High-flashing through the night.’

In the midst is a double throne, about which are grouped four damsels of Fairy race, representing the four seasons. He is addressed by one of them, and informed that the throne is his, and that he is to rule ‘ o’er all the varying year.’ But he is first to choose one of those before him as the partner of his throne, since man being dissatisfied with their ‘ varied toil,’ the plan is to be rectified by art. They then in turn, beginning with Spring, sing to him their several charms of person and mind. We extract the following, though not peculiar to any season, as entirely new and wild.

‘ Then, wrapt in night, the scudding bark,  
(That seem’d, self-pois’d amid the dark,  
    Through upper air to leap,)  
Beheld, from thy most fearful height,  
The rapid dolphin’s azure light  
Cleave, like a living meteor bright,  
    The darkness of the deep.’

And the following, as showing the careful eye of the poet, searching amidst the beauties of nature, and bringing them out, new and fresh, and setting them distinctly before us.

‘ Or, brooding o’er some forest rill,  
Fring’d with the early daffodil,  
    And quiv’ring maiden-hair,  
When thou hast mark’d the dusky bed,  
With leaves and water-rust o’erspread,  
That seem’d an amber light to shed  
    On all was shadow’d there.’

Spring then speaks of her cheerful influences upon the mind, in that tone of sentiment, through which we have already said that nature is always seen by our author.

' 'Twas I to these the magic gave,  
That made thy heart, a willing slave,  
To gentle nature bend ;  
And taught thee how with tree and flower,  
And whispering gale, and dropping shower,  
In converse sweet to pass the hour,  
As with an early friend ;

That mid the noontide sunny haze  
Did in thy languid bosom raise  
The raptures of the boy ;  
When, wak'd as if to second birth,  
Thy soul through every pore look'd forth,  
And gaz'd upon the beauteous earth  
With myriad eyes of joy.'

She ceases.

' And next the Sylph of Summer fair ;  
The while her crisped, golden hair  
Half veil'd her sunny eyes.'

She says to him ;

' And then, as grew thy languid mood,  
To some embow'ring silent wood  
I led thy careless way ;  
Where high from tree to tree in air  
Thou saw'st the spider swing her snare,  
So bright !—as if, entangled there,  
The sun had left a ray ;

Or lur'd thee to some beetling steep  
To mark the deep and quiet sleep  
That wrapt the tarn below ;  
And mountain blue and forest green  
Inverted on its plane serene,  
Dim gleaming through the filmy sheen  
That glaz'd the painted show ;

Perchance, to mark the fisher's skiff  
Swift from beneath some shadowy cliff  
Dart, like a gust of wind ;  
And, as she skimm'd the sunny lake,  
In many a playful wreath her wake  
Far-trailing, like a silvery snake,  
With sinuous length behind.'

Then comes a description more large and elevating, and giving, as we have before observed, to the real, an imaginary character and life. This fanciful view of things may be perceived over the whole poem.

‘Or if the moon’s effulgent form  
The passing clouds of sudden storm  
In quick succession veil ;  
Vast serpents now, their shadows glide,  
And, coursing now the mountain’s side,  
A band of giants huge, they stride  
O’er hill, and wood, and dale.’

She ends ;

‘And now, in accents deep and low,  
Like voice of fondly-cherish’d woe,  
The Sylph of Autumn sad.’

After summing up the wealth of that season she tells him ;

‘With these I may not urge my suit,  
Of Summer’s patient toil the fruit,  
For mortal purpose given ;  
Nor may it fit my sober mood  
To sing of sweetly murmuring flood,  
Or dies of many-colour’d wood,  
That mock the bow of heaven.

But, know, ’twas mine the secret power  
That wak’d thee at the midnight hour  
In bleak November’s reign ;  
’Twas I the spell around thee cast,  
When thou didst hear the hollow blast  
In murmurs tell of pleasures past,  
That ne’er would come again ;

And led thee, when the storm was o’er,  
To hear the sullen ocean roar,  
By dreadful calm oppress ;  
Which still, though not a breeze was there,  
Its mountain-billows heav’d in air,  
As if a living thing it were,  
That strove in vain for rest.’

Who, that has stood on the sea-shore at such a time, has not felt the struggle, working by sympathy, at his own heart ;

and an impatient longing to know something of the restless spirit, moving in the depths of the sea ?

Autumn speaks to us, of the passing away of all things ; and as she throws a sombre light over a decaying world, carries up our thoughts to one of unstained and lasting joys.

‘ And last the Sylph of Winter spake.’

We extract the following.

‘ When thou, beneath the clear blue sky,  
So calm no cloud was seen to fly,  
Hast gaz’d on snowy plain,  
Where nature slept so pure and sweet,  
She seem’d a corse in winding-sheet,  
Whose happy soul had gone to meet  
The blest angelic train.’

How purified does the world appear, as she then spreads it out to us, when not even the dim shadow of a naked tree stains the whiteness of the endless extent of snow, and the innocence of heaven seems here !

We will give one more picture, full of busy and creative fancy.

‘ Or seen at dawn of eastern light  
The frosty toil of Fays by night  
On pane of casement clear,  
Where bright the mimic glaciers shine,  
And Alps, with many a mountain pine,  
And armed knights from Palestine  
In winding march appear.’

They cease, and the poet stands motionless and undecided.

‘ When, lo ! there pour’d a flood of light  
So fiercely on my aching sight,  
I fell beneath the vision bright,  
And with the pain awoke.’

The next in course is the story of ‘The Two Painters.’ We think that no one will charge us with giving over-praise, in saying, that it is written in as easy and familiar narrative, as the tales of Swift, Prior, or Gay. Here we find satire clothing distinct imagery, and placed amidst scenes the most

wild and picturesque. It is written in ridicule of the attempt to reach perfection in one excellency in the art of painting, to the contempt and neglect of every other; and attributes this false and narrow endeavour to pride and sloth. It is set forth in the shades of two lately departed painters, the one, a *colourist*, the other, a painter of *mind*.

‘Once on a time in Charon’s wherry,  
Two painters met, on Styx’s ferry.’

The jealousy and enmity, but too common among brother artists, soon break out in a noisy dispute between them. They are called to order by Charon, who tells them that they are to be brought to the court of Minos.

‘’tis he will try  
Your jealous cause, and prove at once,  
That only dunce can hate a dunce.

‘Thus check’d, in sullen mood they sped,  
Nor more on either side was said;  
Nor aught the dismal silence broke,  
Save only when the boatman’s stroke,  
Deep-whizzing through the wave was heard,  
And now and then a spectre-bird,  
Low-cow’ring, with a hungry scream,  
For spectre-fishes in the stream.

‘Now midway pass’d, the creaking oar  
Is heard upon the fronting shore;  
Where thronging round in many a band,  
The curious ghosts beset the strand.  
Now suddenly the boat they ’spy,  
Like gull diminish’d in the sky;  
And now, like cloud of dusky white,  
Slow sailing o’er the deep of night,  
The sheeted group within the bark  
Is seen amid the billows dark,  
Anon the keel with grating sound  
They hear upon the pebbly ground,  
And now with kind officious hand,  
They help the ghostly crew to land.’

We know of few passages which open such a scene as Mr. Allston has here placed before us. The desolate cry of the spectre-birds—the boat just visible—the sheeted dead, in

‘dusky white,’ seated silent and motionless within it—and all shadowy, and dimly seen through the gloom. The very air breathes upon us as from another world, and we pause amidst the awful and unreal.

Upon landing they are accosted by a patriot ; a rake, who asks, ‘ What think they of a buck that’s dead ? ’ philosophers, poets, and others, inquiring what characters they still hold among the living, and laying open the motives of their conduct when on earth.

The two painters are then called up for trial, and Da Vinci’s shade is appointed by Minos to preside on the occasion. Each sets forth his own excellencies with no little vanity, and speaks of the other with no less abuse. They at last request that their works may be brought, to determine their respective claims to superiority.

‘ Such fair demand, the judge replied,  
Could not with justice be denied.  
Good Merc’ry, hence ! I fly, my Lord,  
The courier said. And, at the word,  
High-bounding, wings his airy flight  
So swift his form eludes the sight ;  
Nor aught is seen his course to mark,  
Save when athwart the region dark  
His brazen helm is spied afar,  
Bright-trailing like a falling star.

‘ And now for minutes ten there stole  
A silence deep o’er every soul—  
When, lo ! again before them stands  
The courier’s self with empty hands.  
Why, how is this ? exclaim’d the twain ;  
Where are the *pictures*, sir ? Explain !  
Good sirs, replied the God of Post,  
I scarce had reach’d the other coast,  
When Charon told me, one he ferried  
Inform’d him they were dead and buried ;  
Then bade me hither haste and say,  
Their ghosts were now upon the way.  
In mute amaze the painters stood,  
But soon upon the Stygian flood,  
Behold ! the spectre-pictures float,  
Like rafts behind the towing boat ;  
Now reach’d the shore, in close array,  
Like armies drill’d in Homer’s day,



When marching on to meet the foe,  
 By bucklers hid from top to toe,  
 They move along the dusky fields,  
 A grisly troop of painted shields;  
 And now, arriv'd in order fair,  
 A gallery huge they hang in air.

‘The ghostly crowd with gay surprise  
 Began to rub their stony eyes;  
 Such pleasant lounge, they all averr'd,  
 None saw since he had been interr'd;  
 And thus, like connoisseurs on earth,  
 Began to weigh the pictures’ worth.’

The pictures are described, and then criticised by the ghostly connoisseurs, and in a most humorous and diverting manner are their faults and blunders represented. The anachronism as to Socrates and Galen, and the awkward meeting of turban, mantle, and satin breeches, which had been strangers to each other all their lives, are very amusingly given.

‘And pray, inquir’d another spectre,  
 What Mufti’s that at pious lecture?  
 That’s Socrates, condemn’d to die;  
 He next, in sable, standing by,  
 Is Galen, come to save his friend,  
 If possible, from such an end;  
 The other figures, group’d around,  
 His scholars, wrapt in wo profound.—  
 And am I like to this portray’d?  
 Exclaim’d the Sage’s smiling Shade.  
 Good Sir, I never knew before  
 That I a Turkish turban wore,  
 Or mantle hemm’d with golden stitches,  
 Much less a pair of satin breeches;  
 But as for him in sable clad,  
 Though wond’rous kind, ’twas rather mad  
 To visit one like me forlorn,  
 So long before himself was born.’

We quote the following of Alexander. It is rather long for an extract, and, in some parts, may be offensive to weak appetites; but it is done with a spirit and truth which will make it relished by healthier constitutions.

‘ And what’s the next ? inquir’d a third ;  
A jolly blade, upon my word !  
’Tis Alexander, Philip’s son,  
Lamenting o’er his battles won ;  
That now his mighty toils are o’er,  
The world has nought to conquer more.  
At which, forth stalking from the host,  
Before them stood the Hero’s ghost.  
Was that, said he, my earthly form,  
The genius of the battle-storm ?  
From top to toe the figure’s Dutch !  
Alas, my friend, had I been such,  
Had I that fat and meaty skull,  
Those bloated cheeks, and eyes so dull,  
That driv’ling mouth, and bottle nose,  
Those shambling legs, and gouty toes ;  
Thus form’d to snore throughout the day,  
And eat and drink the night away ;  
I ne’er had felt the fev’rish flame  
That caus’d my bloody thirst for fame ;  
Nor madly claim’d immortal birth,  
Because the vilest brute on earth ;  
And, oh ! I’d not been doom’d to hear,  
Still whizzing in my blister’d ear,  
The curses deep, in damning peals,  
That rose from ’neath my chariot wheels,  
When I along the embattled plain  
With furious triumph crush’d the slain ;  
I should not thus be doom’d to see,  
In every shape of agony,  
The victims of my cruel wrath,  
Forever dying, strew my path ;  
The grinding teeth, the lips awry,  
The inflated nose, the starting eye,  
The mangled bodies writhing round,  
Like serpents, on the bloody ground ;  
I should not thus forever seem  
A charnel house, and scent the steam  
Of black, fermenting, putrid gore,  
Rank oozing through each burning pore ;  
Behold, as on a dungeon wall,  
The worms upon my body crawl,  
The which, if I would brush away,  
Around my clammy fingers play,  
And, twining fast with many a coil,  
In loathsome sport my labour foil.’

We have only room for the sentence of the judge.

‘Then know, ye vain and foolish pair !  
 Your doom is fix’d a yoke to bear,  
 Like beasts on earth ; and, thus in tether,  
 Five centuries to paint together.  
 If, thus by mutual labours join’d,  
 Your jarring souls should be combin’d,  
 The faults of each the other mending,  
 The powers of both harmonious blending ;  
 Great Jove, perhaps, in gracious vein,  
 May send your souls on earth again ;  
 Yet there One only Painter be ;  
 For thus the eternal Fates decree.  
 One Leg alone shall never run,  
 Nor two Half-Painters make but One.’

We shall make but one or two extracts from the poem on Eccentricity. In the attempt to be striking, the characters are never overdrawn, but such as will come up in the memory of any man who has been an observer of the ridiculous and affected in human nature. The *antiquarian in halters*, we believe, is taken from fact. We shall quote the first character that presents itself.

‘Behold, loud-rattling like a thousand drums,  
 Eccentric Hal, the child of Nature, comes !  
 Of Nature once—but *now* he acts a part,  
 And Hal is now the full grown boy of art.  
 In youth’s pure spring his high impetuous soul  
 Nor custom own’d nor fashion’s vile control.  
 By truth impell’d where beck’ning Nature led,  
 Through life he mov’d with firm elastic tread ;  
 But soon the world, with wonder-teeming eyes,  
 His manners mark, and goggle with surprise.  
 ‘He’s wond’rous strange !’ exclaims each gaping clod,  
 ‘A wond’rous genius, for he’s wond’rous odd !’  
 Where’er he goes, there goes before his—fame,  
 And courts and taverns echo round his name ;  
 ‘Till, fairly knock’d by admiration down,  
 The petted monster cracks his wond’rous crown.  
 No longer now to simple nature true,  
 He studies only to be oddly new ;  
 Whate’er he does, whate’er he deigns to say,  
 Must all be said and done the oddest way ;

Nay, e'en in dress eccentric as in thought,  
 His wardrobe seems by Lapland witches wrought,  
 Himself by goblins in a whirlwind drest,  
 With rags of clouds from Hecla's stormy crest.'

And again.

'Nor less renown'd whom stars invet'rate doom  
 To smiles eternal, or eternal gloom ;  
 For what's a *character* save one confin'd  
 To some unchanging sameness of the mind ;  
 To some strange, fix'd monotony of mien,  
 Or dress forever brown, forever green ?

'A sample comes. Observe his sombre face,  
 Twin-born with Death, without his brother's grace !  
 No joy in mirth his soul perverted knows,  
 Whose only joy to tell of others' woes.  
 A fractur'd limb, a conflagrating fire,  
 A name or fortune lost his tongue inspire.  
 From house to house where'er misfortunes press,  
 Like Fate, he roams, and revels in distress ;  
 In every ear with dismal boding moans—  
 A walking register of sighs and groans !'

The draught of the following character we think quite equal to Pope's happiest manner, and sketched with all his freedom and accuracy of touch.

'But who is he, that sweet, obliging youth ?  
 He looks the picture of ingenuous truth.  
 Oh, that's his antipode, of courteous race,  
 The man of bows and ever-smiling face.  
 Why Nature made him, or for what design'd,  
 Never he knew, nor ever sought to find,  
 'Till cunning came, blest harbinger of ease !  
 And kindly whisper'd, 'thou wert born to please.'  
 Rous'd by the news, behold him now expand,  
 Like beaten gold, and glitter o'er the land.  
 Well stored with nods and sly approving winks,  
 Now first with this and now with that he thinks ;  
 Howe'er opposing, still assents to each,  
 And claps a dovetail to each booby's speech.  
 At random thus for all, for none, he lives,  
 Profusely lavish though he nothing gives ;  
 The world he roves as living but to show

A friendless man without a single foe ;  
 From bad to good, to bad from good to run,  
 And find a character by seeking none.'

We must express the wish that Mr. Allston may not write any more *moral* poems, as they are styled. No man would lose those of Cowper or Campbell ; yet as they have been hitherto conducted, they act as restraints upon the invention, shutting it up from plot, and varied incidents, and worlds of its own creation. And, certainly, an intellect like Mr. Allston's, delighting in the imaginary, sacrifices its highest powers in this lecture-room of the Muses. They should be left to men of the character of Queen Ann's time, who were formed to shine in such works, and were never familiar with the thoughts and images which belong to minds such as our author's. We do not object to the satire and character-drawing ; but we should always be glad to see them enlivened by incidents, with something of dramattick activity, and placed in scenes as new and poetical as those in which we find 'The Two Painters.' We have stated our reasons, and are confident that they will not be thought to proceed from a want of discerning the beauties of the poem before us.

'The Paint King' is a mock romantick tale. Unlike all other works of the kind, it is crowded with imagery, sometimes sublime, and then delicate and beautiful. 'The Paint King' carries off the 'fair Ellen,' for the purpose of grinding her into paint, with which he might produce a true likeness of the beautiful queen of the Fairies, and thereby win her good graces. The whole is so worked together in the narrative, that we hardly know how to take out any part of it. We will, however, give the carrying off of Ellen.

'She turn'd and beheld on each shoulder a wing.

'Oh, heaven ! cried she, who art thou ?'

From the roof to the ground did his fierce answer ring,

As frowning, he thunder'd, 'I am the PAINT-KING !

And mine, lovely maid, thou art now !'

'Then high from the ground did the grim monster lift

The loud-screaming maid like a blast ;

And he sped through the air like a meteor swift,

While the clouds, wand'ring by him, did fearfully drift

To the right and the left as he pass'd.

‘ Now suddenly sloping his hurricane flight,  
With an eddying whirl he descends ;  
The air all below him becomes black as night,  
And the ground where he treads, as if mov’d with affright,  
Like the surge of the Caspian bends.

‘ ‘ I am here ! ’ said the Fiend, and he thundering knock’d  
At the gates of a mountainous cave ;  
The gates open flew, as by magic unlock’d,  
While the peaks of the mount, reeling to and fro, rock’d,  
Like an island of ice on the wave.’

He is then represented sitting in his cave, which is thus described.

‘ On the skull of a Titan, that Heaven defied, ·  
Sat the fiend, like the grim Giant Gog,  
While aloft to his mouth a huge pipe he applied,  
Twice as big as the Eddystone Lighthouse, descried  
As it looms through an easterly fog.

‘ And anon, as he puff’d the vast volumes, were seen,  
In horrid festoons on the wall,  
Legs and arms, heads and bodies emerging between,  
Like the drawing-room grim of the Scotch Sawney Beane,  
By the Devil dress’d out for a ball.’

He tells her to what she is doomed, and then sets about his work like an old artist, and having nearly finished the picture ;

‘ Then, stamping his foot, did the monster exclaim,  
‘ Now I brave, cruel Fairy, thy scorn ! ’  
When lo ! from a chasm wide-yawning there came  
A light tiny chariot of rose-colour’d flame,  
By a team of ten glow-worms upborne.

‘ Enthron’d in the midst on an emerald bright,  
Fair Geraldine sat without peer ;  
Her robe was a gleam of the first blush of light,  
And her mantle the fleece of a noon-cloud white,  
And a beam of the moon was her spear.’

After the Fairy has appeared before him and reminded him of his former failures, he proceeds in his work ; but when about painting the pupils, he suddenly discovers that

he neglected grinding up the eyes of Ellen, and looking round, sees them in the jaws of a mouse, who bounds off with them.

‘‘ I am lost !’’ said the Fiend, and he fell like a stone ;  
Then rising the Fairy in ire,  
With a touch of her finger she loosen’d her zone,  
(While the limbs on the wall gave a terrible groan,)  
And she swell’d to a column of fire.’

She smites him with her wand, hurls him down a chasm, and restores Ellen to life. The painting of the picture is described with the skill of an artist, and with great beauty.

This is followed by two short poems, the first, ‘ to a Lady, who lamented that she had never been in love ;’ the other, to one, ‘ who spoke slightly of Poets.’ There are the same unceasing activity of imagination, and the same delicate sentiment in these, that we find in the preceding poems. But we must not quote any further. We are reminded that the book in which we write, is not all our own, and it would be but a little short of rudeness in us to take up any more room, and crowd out our fellow-labourers.

The volume closes with about half a dozen sonnets, and three or four little poems in the simple ballad style. Some of the sonnets almost reconciled us to that kind of writing ; and we can assure Mr. Allston, that they must have no little merit in our eyes, to work such a change in us. We would mention particularly, those on the Falling Group in the Last Judgment ; and ‘ The Three Angels before the Tent of Abraham.’

The remaining poems are written with great simplicity and nature. We have as strong a predilection for such productions, as we have aversion from sonnets. There is such a large class of readers, who are so utterly unable to distinguish between the childish and the perfectly simple, that we will not alarm them by bringing up the subject of ballad simplicity ; but are content to leave Mr. Allston to the judgment of those who are conversant with such delicate matters.

We should have been more particular in our remarks upon the several extracts, had we not been so full in our observations upon the general character of this volume. Besides, it might have looked a little too officious, to have been continually pointing out obvious beauties.

The volume before us is clearly original in its character. We do not find in it imitations of the style, or borrowing of the circumstances, situations, or images of any author. Many of its subjects are new, and all marked by the peculiar and distinct cast of our author's mind. To this very novelty may be, in a good measure, attributed its want of popularity. We are surrounded by a multitude of criticks, here, who call every thing new and peculiar, and not backed by authority, as in bad taste and extravagant. Such criticks are to poets, what connoisseurs (a troublesome set of gentlemen, with whom no doubt our author is well acquainted,) are to artists ;— who gaze upon pictures all their lives, without its once occurring to their minds, that to be judges of paintings they should study nature, from which they are taken. So with our criticks, if a work comes out unlike what has been seen before, they have no mode of determining its merits ; for their models are no longer guides. Never having learned that combinations from nature are endless, and that they may be taken in as many and various views, as the hills that break her surface ; they seem to be governed by the absurd notion, that their few models had taken from her all that was worthy our notice, and that what is left should be thrown aside as worthless. As if all that is good or beautiful in creation, were to be grasped by a few feeble mortals, and not rather remain the study of the beings placed in the midst of it, to the end of time. Surely all is the well-ordered and consistent design of One Being, who as he has given infinite breadth and variety to the mind, so has he spread before it a scene as wide and changing ; and to set up rules, discordant with this plan, is bad philosophy, (we might almost say, false religion,) and paltry taste, narrowing our observation, and weakening the constantly renewing vigour of the intellectual powers.

Mr. Allston's versification is peculiarly easy, and seems thrown out with as little effort as it is read. With all his ease, however, he is always musical, and we have only to object to a loose line here and there. A little more care in the going over, would have saved us the remark. He certainly deserves some credit for his independence in this, as a few of our leading poets of the day, tired of the monotony of Pope, (which is only tolerable from his compactness of verse and crowded sense,) have come to consider smoothness



and musick unessential in metre. We like breaks and varied accents ; but a poetick ear may surely avoid the clumsy versification of Hunt's *Rimini*, or such as now and then occurs in the *Lalla Rookh* of Moore. We took up the third canto of Byron, on a melancholy, rainy day, and it made the commonness of life more than tasteless for a week after. But we were sadly puzzled how to read it. We soon gave up, in despair, reading it as rhyme, and went along with it tolerably well, as a sort of blank verse ; but now and then we came to a passage, which we could not get through, with all our endeavours, either as rhyme, blank verse, or even tolerable prose. What to call it we know not ; and shall leave to those, who have the honour of its invention, the task of giving it a name. After such men as Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton have given us verse of such rich and varied tone, and deep harmony, it looks like vain affectation in poets, of the present day, to show a laborious neglect of it as beneath their powers. They have done much towards bringing back the native scenery, the thoughts, and feelings of the older bards ; would that they came upon us in the same strain again.

As we are of the number of those, who saw most of these poems in manuscript, we may be allowed to express our regret at the alterations made in the publishing. So far as we can recollect, they are, though few, in every instance for the worse. The gushing fount of day in the description of the cave in the '*Seasons*,' certainly is not an improvement upon '*sunny thread*.' And in that beautiful image,

' Yon bird that trims his purple (sunny) wings  
As on the bending bow he swings.'

Purple is but a poor substitute for the original epithet. Again ; in the '*Paint King*,' the change to '*Ovidian art*' is coldly classical and out of keeping amidst the warm natural *English* character of the volume ; and so of the rest. We were sorry at not finding in '*Eccentricity*' one or two passages, which we thought amongst its most beautiful, when we read the manuscript. But this seems to be between ourselves and the author ; and our readers may ask what it all means. He may think that we mean to be impertinent, and say, that we have no right, as reviewers, to lay down his book and take up his loose papers. He will judge us

more justly, if he sets it down to the interest we take in him from his book, and from reflecting that he is a stranger in a foreign land. We think, too, that the alterations must have been made by some friend of, perhaps, very good intentions, but poor judgment.

Our author's language is all good, but is not strictly the poetick language; and we should think that he had not been a wide and constant reader, of the old English poets.

Now that we have gone through with our notice of the few trifling faults of this volume, we would advise our readers to make themselves acquainted with it. They certainly will find it worthy their pride, in the general poverty of literature in our country. It remains for us to thank our author for what he has done for our good name, and to hope from him still more. May he find the strangers, by whom he is surrounded, as fair, and void of prejudices, as is his own mind, and may his solitary labours be cheered by that fame which he so well deserves.

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**ART. XVII.** *An authentic Narrative of the loss of the American brig Commerce, wrecked on the western coast of Africa, in the month of August, 1815; with an account of the sufferings of her surviving officers and crew, who were enslaved by the wandering Arabs on the great African Desert, or Zahahrah;—and observations historical, geographical, &c. made during the travels of the author, while a slave to the Arabs, and in the empire of Morocco. By James Riley, late master and supercargo. Preceded by a brief sketch of the author's life; and concluded by a description of the famous city of Tombuctoo, on the river Niger, and of another large city, far south of it, on the same river, called Wassanah; narrated to the author at Mogadore, by Sidi Hamet, an Arabian merchant;—with an Arabic and English Vocabulary. T. & W. Mercein, New York, 1817. pp. 570.*

THIS portentous title page is not the only external recommendation of the volume before us. It is ornamented with a portrait of the author, furnished with rare plates, illustrative of divers scenes, descriptions, and adventures, and sup-